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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000142

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DEPT FOR EUR/SCE, DRL, INL, AND S/WCI, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN  
FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER, OPDAT FOR  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [KDEM](#) [MOPS](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: UNMIK POLICE APPLY LESSONS LEARNED IN THE  
WAKE OF DEADLY FEBRUARY 10 DEMONSTRATION

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Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Recent USOP conversations with top UNMIK police leaders reveal that UNMIK plans to use the same overall approach toward the planned March 3 demonstration of the extremist Self-Determination Movement (SDM) that it used during the violent SDM protest on February 10. That is, a first line of Kosovo Police Service (KPS) officers in normal uniform, a second line of KPS police in riot gear, backed up by a line of UNMIK specialized riot police, which in turn would be backed up KFOR riot control soldiers, ready to intervene as coordinated with UNMIK police and approved by COMKFOR. However, UNMIK civpol plans to substantially tighten command-and-control, a key failing on Feb. 10, and make certain that lethal force -- rubber bullets killed two protestors during the demonstration -- is used as a last resort in accordance with standard norms and only if the officer's life is endangered. Although UNMIK officials stressed that the investigation into the deaths is ongoing, the strong implication was that Romanian riot control police did not respect these norms when they fired their weapons on February 10 and were likely responsible for the two deaths (strictly protect).

12. (C) SUMMARY (cont'd): Other UNMIK adjustments include using better crowd dispersal tactics before and after tear gas is administered, including the use of water trucks, and erecting concrete barriers, vice wire fences, to stop vehicles from crashing through police lines -- a successful SDM tactic on February 10. The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) continues to lack equipment, especially gas masks, and this is being remedied, but will not be resolved by March 3. At a February 23 meeting with the KPS director of operations, SDM leaders refused to renounce violence categorically and said they would "throw rocks and paint at police," claiming this did not constitute an act of violence. Meanwhile, KFOR is supporting UNMIK police by establishing aggressive vehicle checkpoints to search for weapons and monitoring border areas with Macedonia and the Presevo valley to discourage participation of any ethnic Albanian extremists from these

areas. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) On February 22 and 23 USOP discussed lessons learned from the February 10 violent protest of the Self-Determination Movement (SDM) and preparations for the upcoming March 3 SDM protest with new interim UNMIK Police Commissioner Trygve Kalleberg (Norwegian), Kalleberg advisor and former UNMIK Mitrovica Regional Commander Lars Finstad, Chief of Staff Uwe Marquardt, Director of Operations Meinolf Schlotmann, and Deputy Director of Operations Larry Wilson (U.S.).

Same Operational Plan, But Better Command-and-Control and Tactics

14. (C) These UNMIK police officials noted that UNMIK civpol would keep to its operational plan of having Kosovo Police Service (KPS) officers provide a first line of defense, in an effort to have them communicate directly with demonstrators to decrease tension and deter them from violent acts, such as attempting to breach the line. UNMIK specialized riot police ("Formed Police Units (FPUs)) -- made up of Polish and Pakistani officers on March 3, with a mobile Ukrainian unit in reserve -- would back the KPS to form a second line of defense. In the unlikely event this line was breached, riot control soldiers from KFOR would provide a third line of defense.

15. (C) UNMIK police officials emphasized that the use of rubber bullets, which killed two demonstrators on February 10, would be subject to far more stringent command-and-control. Finstad, who will be ground commander on March 3, noted that these bullets would only be used under "strict order" of the command staff and only if the officer's life was endangered. Director of Operations Schlotmann (protect), while stressing that the investigation into the

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deaths was ongoing, gave the strong impression that Romanian FPU had not respected the standard distance for using rubber bullets on February 10. He made clear these bullets could not be used at close range, unless the officer's life was in danger. All noted that contingents of international police came as self-contained units, with their own equipment, uniforms and weapons, and they would not be asked to have rubber bullets removed from their weapons. However, all these units had trained together and were aware of the rules of engagement for using lethal force.

16. (C) Schlotmann said police would now use concrete barriers to stop any vehicles from crashing through police barricades. SDM had used this tactic successfully twice before, on November 28 and February 10, and wire fences had proven ineffective, he added. Schlotmann also indicated that water trucks would be available to disperse violent demonstrators. Schlotmann's deputy, Larry Wilson, an American police officer who was on the ground on February 10, said that UNMIK police would from the outset employ tactics on March 3 that had proved successful: if tear gas needed to be used, police would not wait for demonstrators to disperse, but would advance. On February 10, he noted, police had remained stationary as demonstrators from the rear kept filling the gap from those who fled the tear gas at the front. Police would also coordinate action to engage the demonstrators from the rear; once police had encircled protestors in this manner on Feb. 10, they dispersed quickly.

Praise for KPS

17. (C) Wilson and others had praise for the performance of the KPS on February 10. They said KPS officers had behaved professionally and had remained on the scene -- without gas masks -- after being the unintentional target of UNMIK police tear gas volleys. Asked if KPS would have gas masks on March 3, Chief of Staff Marquardt responded that this would not be

possible, but that plans were underway to bring in around 400-700 from Germany as soon as could be arranged. (Note: Marquardt asked whether the U.S. might be able to arrange transportation from Germany to Pristina; post is awaiting further communication from UNMIK or KPS to identify what equipment or assistance might be needed. End Note.)

#### SDM Refuses to Renounce Violence in Meeting with KPS

18. (C) At a February 23 meeting between KPS Chief of Operations Gen. Rashit Maliqi and SDM leaders Glauk Konjufca and Liburn Aliu, Maliqi, who said KPS supported the right of SDM to demonstrate peacefully, specifically asked what route the group planned to take and what protestors planned to do. (UNMIK police were not present; Maliqi later briefed Director of Operations Schlotmann, who then briefed USOP.) The SDM leaders drew a distinction between violence against persons and property, and -- though they claimed to eschew violence -- in the same breath said they "planned to throw some paint and rocks" at police. Maliqi warned against doing this, and asked whether protestors planned to occupy government institutions; he was told that SDM could not share this information as "it was secret." Maliqi again warned the SDM representatives that if

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the protest turned violent, the demonstrators would be asked to disperse, at which point the KPS would expect SDM leaders to tell their followers to go home.

19. (C) Maliqi plans to meet again with SDM leaders on February 27 and present them with a map of the route the KPS wants them to take in order to avoid confrontation. The KPS will then release a public statement detailing the lengths to which the KPS has attempted to reason with the SDM, and the expected refusal of SDM to adjust their plans and avoid violence.

#### KFOR's Support Role

110. (C) With regard to the March 3 protest, DATT reports

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that KFOR plans a three-phased approach to support UNMIK civpol in the run-up to and aftermath of the event. The first phase, running from February 28 until the demonstration, will focus on the following elements: an aggressive intelligence operation; 24-hour border control support at gates located in the U.S. KFOR sector (to deny access to individuals bringing weapons in from Macedonia); 24-hour friendly, but highly visible vehicle control points (VCPs) on routes entering Pristina to search for weapons or any device that might be used as a weapon during the demonstration, with special attention to ethnic Albanians from Macedonia or Presevo valley; and generally increased KFOR vigilance and force readiness to react to incidents that could threaten a safe and secure environment Kosovo-wide. During the second phase, at the demonstration itself, KFOR would employ robust VCPs around Pristina that could close access to the city on order; pre-deploy riot control capable forces within Pristina in support of UNMIK police; and conduct event documentation for post-operational analysis. (Note: Similar to UNMIK's tightening of its control-and-command over lethal force, KFOR has revised its rules of engagement for riot control such that rubber bullets, water cannon, pepper spray, and electric shock can only be used by riot control soldiers with the authorization of COMKFOR, not the commander of the multi-national task force in question.)

111. (C) In the third phase, from the end of the demonstration until approximately 10 p.m. on March 3, KFOR would monitor post-demonstration activities and the departure of groups from Pristina; be prepared to sustain support to UNMIK and KPS to secure designated sites within Pristina; be ready to sustain VCPs established during phase two to deny entry of individuals seeking to join violence should it continue in

Pristina; and assist in apprehension of individuals involved in violent acts.

Comment

¶12. (C) Riot control is not an exact science, and only time will tell whether UNMIK police and the KPS have learned the correct lessons from February 10 and covered all the necessary contingencies that might arise if the March 3 SDM protest turns violent. Nevertheless, both appear to have made an effort to avoid repeating the turn of events that led to the death of two protestors on February 10 and the subsequent blow to UNMIK credibility and the final status process. Police will face a determined foe on March 3, one still determined to use violence -- and possibly serious violence -- as a means of provoking an escalating response from law enforcement. We have strongly urged Kosovo's political leadership -- President Sejdiu, PM Ceku, main opposition leader Thaci, Assembly Speaker Berisha -- to state clearly and unambiguously that support for SDM means opposing the status process and the aspirations of the Kosovar people. President Sejdiu plans to address the Kosovar public via a television broadcast on all three national networks Thursday, March 1. We hope that these strong messages combined with a resolute but proportional response by police will further undercut the appeal of the SDM organization, which has no real platform or purpose beyond destroying the Ahtisaari process. END COMMENT.

¶13. (SBU) U.S. Office Pristina does not/not clear this cable for release to U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.  
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